

What is Claimed is:

1. An image forming apparatus comprising:

a sheet eject mechanism movable between an initial position and a sorting position in a direction orthogonal to a sheet transport direction in sorting processing, sheets being sorted by copy or by image-forming job in the sorting processing; and

a control device for regulating a delay time required for the sheet eject mechanism moving from the initial position to the sorting position with a sheet held therein to start to return to the initial position after ejecting the sheet such that the sheet eject mechanism completes its return to the initial position within a transport interval, sheets being transported sequentially to the sheet eject mechanism at the transport interval.

2. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the control device compares the transport interval with a preset reference transport interval, thereby setting a longer delay time than a reference delay time corresponding to the reference transport interval if the transport interval is longer than the reference transport interval, and a shorter delay time than the reference delay time if the transport interval is shorter than the

reference transport interval.

3. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the control device determines whether or not a sheet is of a particular size with its transport interval shorter than the reference transport interval, and if the sheet is of the particular size, sets a shorter delay time than the reference delay time corresponding to the reference transport interval.

4. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet eject mechanism moves with each copy or image-forming job to sort alternately between the initial position and sorting positions arranged on both sides of the initial position in the direction orthogonal to the sheet transport direction.

5. An image forming apparatus comprising:

a sheet eject mechanism movable between an initial position and a sorting position in a direction orthogonal to a sheet transport direction in sorting processing, sheets being sorted by copy or by job in the sorting processing; and

a control device for selectively setting either of a first image-forming speed and a second image-forming

speed as an image-forming speed in the sorting processing, the first image-forming speed being used when sorting processing is not performed, and the second image-forming speed being less than the first image-forming speed.

6. The image forming apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the control device, comparing in sheet sorting processing the transport interval at the first image-forming speed with a preset reference transport interval, sets the first image-forming speed as the image-forming speed in the sorting processing when the sheet transport interval is longer than the preset reference transport interval; and sets the second image-forming speed as the image-forming speed when the sheet transport interval is shorter than the reference transport interval.

7. The image forming apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the control device determines whether a sheet is of a particular size, the sheet transport interval being shorter than the reference transport interval in the particular size, and sets the second image-forming speed when the sheet is of the particular size.

8. The image forming apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the control device changes timings at which a sheet

is transported to an image forming section.

9. The image forming apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the sheet eject mechanism moves with each copy of sheets or each image-forming job to sort alternately between the initial position and sorting positions arranged on both sides of the initial position in the direction orthogonal to the sheet transport direction.